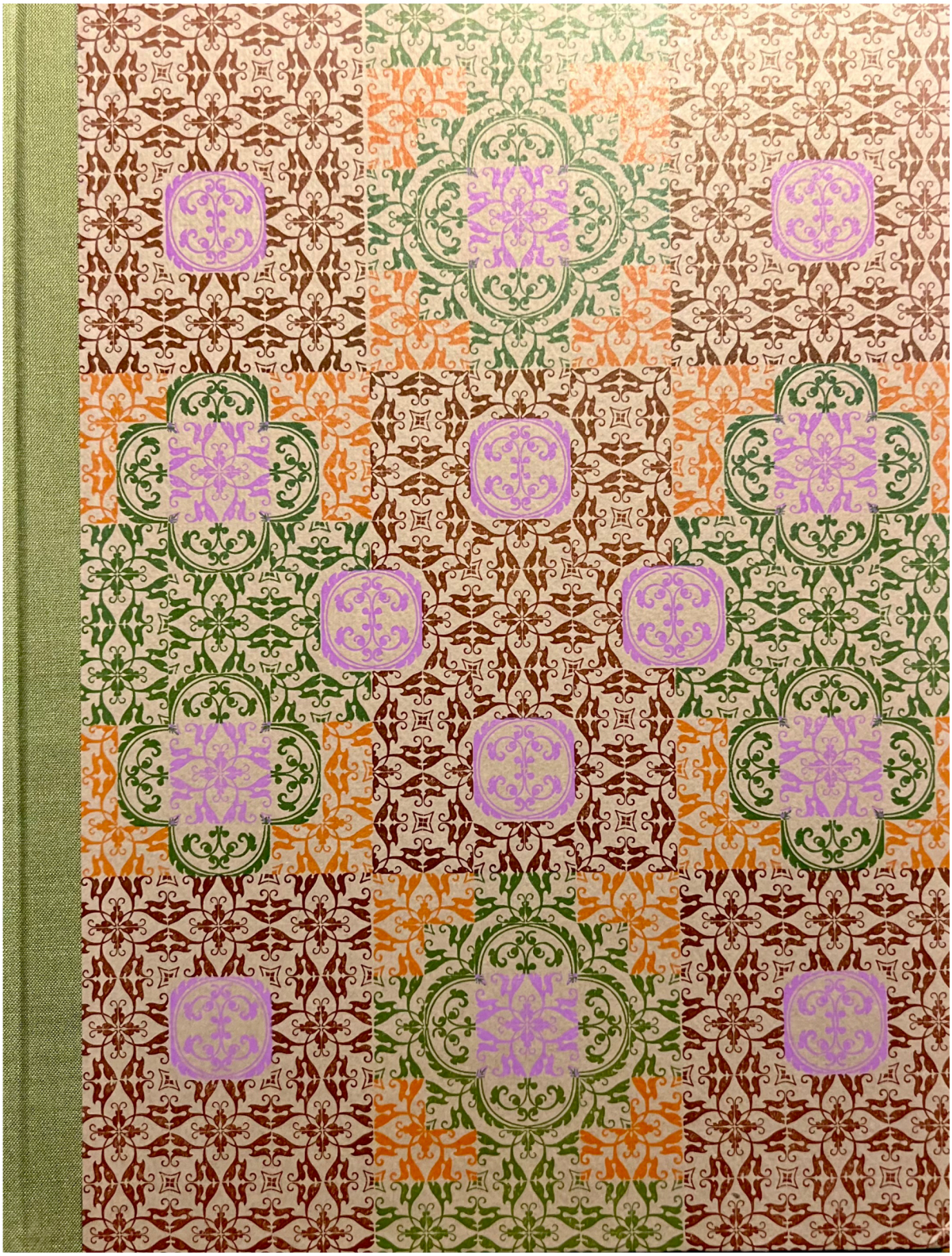
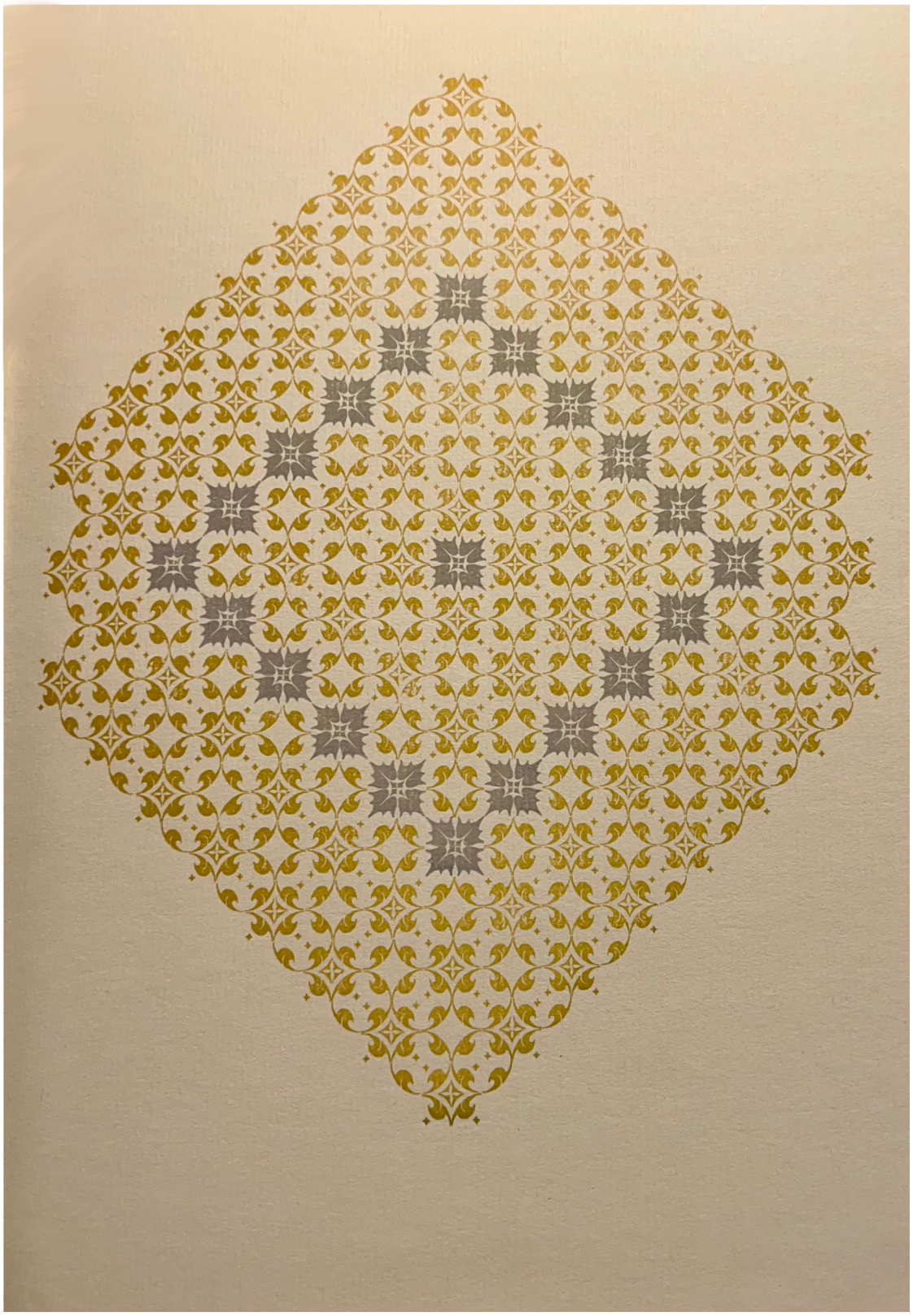
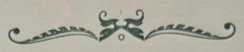
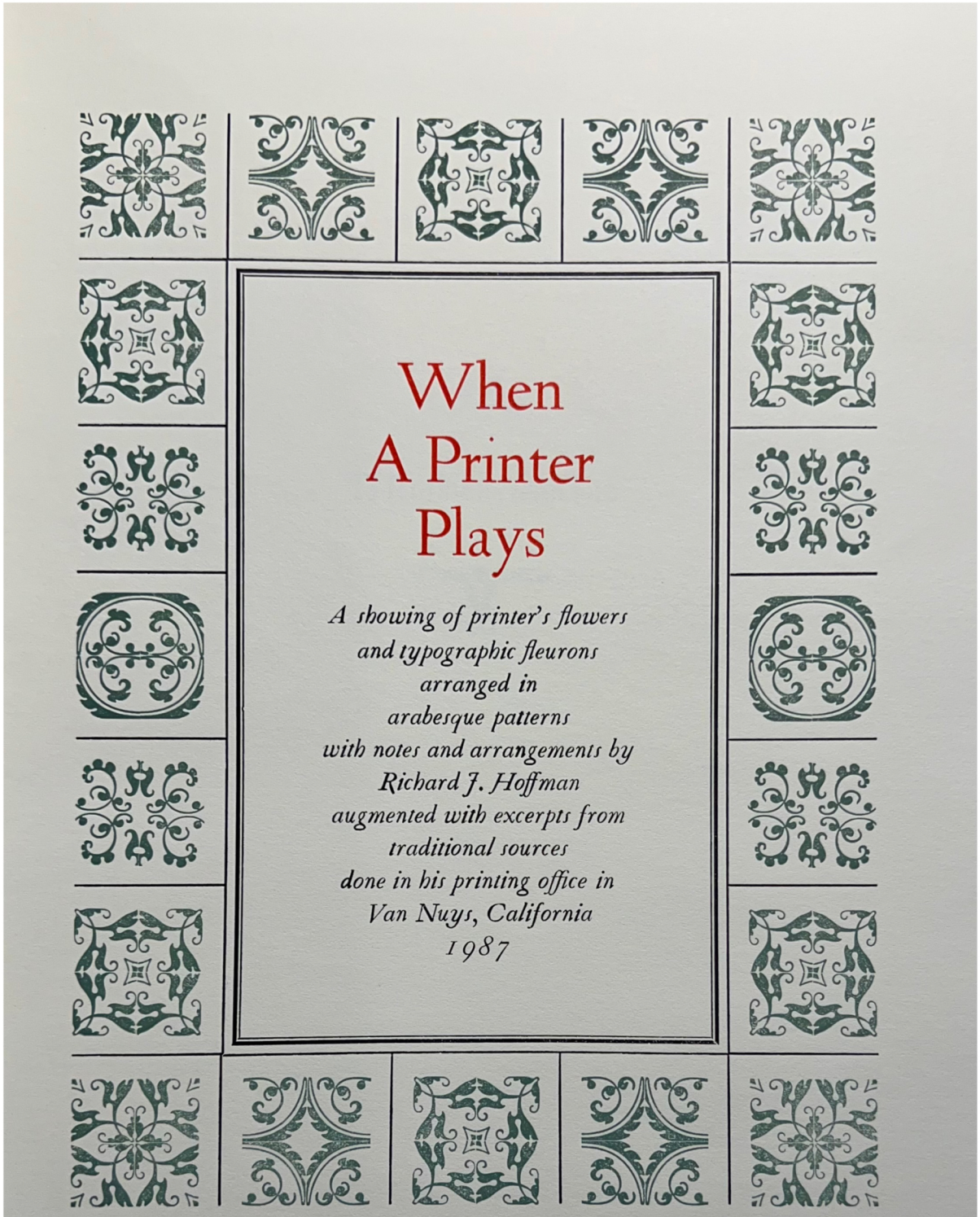






When a Printer Plays



When A Printer Plays

A showing of printer's flowers
and typographic fleurons
arranged in
arabesque patterns
with notes and arrangements by
Richard J. Hoffman
augmented with excerpts from
traditional sources
done in his printing office in
Van Nuys, California
1987

To Ruthie . . . with love

Contents

WHEN A PRINTER PLAYS 9

ON PRINTER'S FLOWERS (BY S.M.) 29

ABOUT TYPOGRAPHIC FLOWERS 31

EXCERPTS FROM WRITINGS BY

PHILIP LUCKOMBE 31

EDWARD ROWE MORES 37

FRANCIS MEYNELL 41

FREDERIC WARDE 44

BEATRICE WARDE 46

WILLIAM A. DWIGGINS 50

DANIEL BERKELEY UPDIKE 52

BRUCE ROGERS 52

JOHN RYDER 54

When a Printer Plays

FASCINATING—kaleidoscopic—ever changing are the serendipitous arabesques that result from arranging, then rearranging, inverting, adding or eliminating the small decorative pieces of type called fleurons or printers' flowers; all without remotely exhausting the constantly changing visual patterns that are created during their composition. These bits of the type founder's art are almost as old as type itself. Many of the earliest specimens of printing show the fleurons used to embellish and add interest to the text. It was inevitable that enterprising compositors would quickly experiment with assembling the flowers into groups, forming headbands, initials, and tailpieces. They had the examples of the book binder's work on the tooled covers of handlettered volumes for guidance. The lovely Arabian designs were known and were later cast into type; today these same designs are still being used. The most popular series is named for an early punch-cutter and type founder, Robert Granjon, who worked in the early 1500s. The arabesque at the top of this page and the initial are made with today's version of the Granjon ornaments in the 36 and 18 point sizes. Other designs used today are almost as old and their ancestry has been traced back by scholars to very early sources.

Today's printers have access to this rich mine of decorative material, augmented by several hundred years of foundry output by later designers. These accumulated patterns have been used (and misused) with more or less frequency over the years. Today they are somewhat out of fashion for general printing purposes but show up in period pieces and so-called fine press editions.

GARAMOND ORNAMENTS

It is a source of regret that the designers of some of the commonly used typographic flowers and classic decorative designs are unknown. The many type foundries along with the monotype and linotype companies both in the United States and Europe created ornaments concomitantly with their tremendous outpouring of new type styles. Leafing through the old type specimen books one can find the source or inspiration for much of the decorative material that the machine typesetting firms reworked or copied, thus their origins are clouded. Sometimes, as in the case of the Weiss types, the ornaments were also created by the designer, Professor Emil Rudolf Weiss, and are so named. However, many of the single units are parentless but still add measureably to the resources of the creative typographer. Careful scrutiny will lead the reader to discover these charming single ornaments, generally centerpieces, scattered throughout the arrangements.

Photo-typesetting has all but driven traditional letterpress composition out of the field. While typographic decoration can be and is produced photographically, the ease of combining the metal squares of type and in manipulating their sequence seems to limit this form of typographic "play" to the time-honored hand composition method. And play it is. There is no justification for the complexity of some of the assemblies that are shown in the following pages. A simple grouping could easily satisfy all needs for ornament whose main function should be to make the printed words of the text more attractive. Yet, once the fleurons are brought together and a proof pulled, it is almost impossible not to try other arrangements, units turned in different directions, one flower substituted for another. Thus the arabesques are modified, sometimes grow, and usually be-

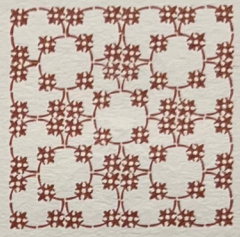
come increasingly complex. The basically simple forms (which are legion) have not been included because they are almost self-evident. Most of the time they were the starting point from which the more intricate solutions evolved.

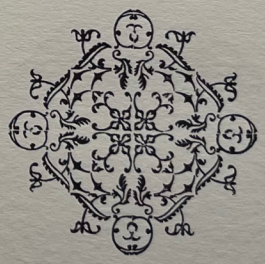
There are over 200 arabesque settings in this printing. This number could easily be enlarged by simply substituting a different unit in each design, or reversing the order of the type pieces or adding one or eliminating a pair, *ad infinitum*. Often the design shown is the reluctant choice of one of three or four equally satisfactory versions, each slightly different, that evolved during the many trials and proofings that each setting suffered.

Many of the arabesques in this book are the result of such developmental effort. The first step is to choose a series of related typographical decorative material as the basis for the design. Selecting units, usually four, that combine into a center-piece, other members of the type family are set around the center and a proof is taken and the result studied. Seldom is the first arrangement satisfactory. Some fleurons must be changed, some inverted, some added, some deleted; many additional proofs are pulled. Often the elimination of one of the decorative pieces of type results in a white area that relieves the busy appearance and sparkles the composition. Sometimes the unexpected joining of pictorial elements in the type flowers when joined in other than the usual manner creates a fascinating visual form—a happy accident that results in a design quite different from that of the original plan.

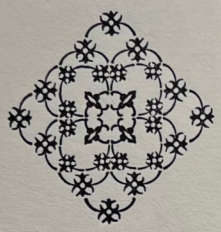
Most typographical arabesques shown in this collection are symmetrical; they need not be. The type material could have easily been arranged in wider-than-deep rectangles, such as headbands, or in inverted triangles

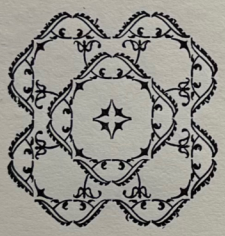
GARAMOND ORNAMENTS





GARAMOND ORNAMENTS





(a favorite form for most printers), or in elongated diamonds or free forms. But to enhance their jewel-like appearance and to keep the project within bounds, the symmetrical form was usually maintained. The diamond shape design most frequently resulting is due to the design of the type ornament units, usually a left and a right version of the same pattern. By careful manipulation the finished shape can be made into a rounded or square form. Sometimes the corners can be eliminated to give a somewhat octagonal shape.

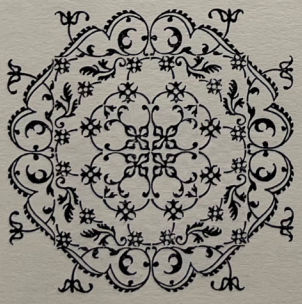
Type flowers, using the same art motif, are often made in several type sizes. Such variations are evident in the completed compositions, and are quite graphically shown in the examples on page 35 where this leaf is seen in the 12, 18, 24 and 36 point sizes.

On page 33 the three center arabesques show dramatically how the rearrangement of the leaf pattern creates a somewhat new result. All three compositions have the same centerpiece. By changing the leaves from left to right, the middle one was made different from the other two. Then, on the outside compositions, the reversal of the tiny corner piece fill-in units makes one arabesque seem concave while the other appears round.

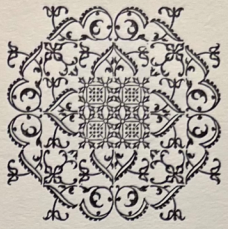
The introduction of printers' rules (the technical name for printing material that makes lines of various thicknesses that can be cut to any desired length) adds a new dimension when creating arabesques and opens numerous additional possibilities for variations. Examples can be seen on pages 21, 42, 43, 47, 48, 50 and 51.

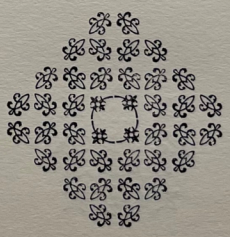
The designs during assembly and modifications are proved in black ink. Then the thought of color arises—should the entire composition be in a single color, if so, what color? Or perhaps some element in the design could be separated and printed in a

GARAMOND ORNAMENTS



GARAMOND ORNAMENTS





GARAMOND ORNAMENTS

GARAMOND ORNAMENTS

second color. A caution is necessary. Color is less dominant than black and parts of the arabesque might change value if in color.

Bruce Rogers, the distinguished American book designer, was an absolute master of creating designs with type ornaments. His work abounds with his ingenious inventions used as headbands, initials, and tailpieces. He seldom limited himself to the symmetrical form being amazingly creative with free shapes. Los Angeles' great printer, Saul Marks, was equally adept in creating beautiful work with printers' decorative material. He was especially fond of the Granjon Arabesque and many of his finest works used these classic designs to perfection. In his lighter moments Daniel Berkeley Updike was a most facile manipulator of the standard English ornaments and combined them handsomely. (My favorite Updike book, *In the Day's Work*, is enhanced by his use of a very simple border on the title page, headbands, and initials.)

LOVERS OF TRIVIA may be entertained by knowing that many of the arrangements are quite complex in their make-up. Even the simplest will contain at least 12 to 16 individual pieces of type with another 12 to 16 pieces of spacing material to hold the printing units in position. The most complex, albeit in one square inch, page 24 (1), has 77 pieces of printing type and over 30 spaces. The smallest, also page 24 (2), is composed of 3 point border material; there are 40 bits of type and 16 spaces in this tiny setting in less than one-half inch of space.

THE CHARACTERISTIC that makes flowers so charmingly useful in printing is their typographic nature. They are types; their manufacture identical with alphabetic characters. Their color, that is the weight of the printing

GARAMOND ORNAMENTS

THE GRANJON ARABESQUE

surface, can be chosen to harmonize with the type font. There is a rightness to their use that is seldom matched by drawn decorative work.

No one has accepted the challenge sent forth by Francis Meynell and Stanley Morison in the lead article of the initial number of the *Fleuron* in 1925 when they wrote a detailed and scholarly work on "Printers Flowers and Arabesques." They anticipated that other scholars would pick up from their start and amplify the work. Thus far, it has not been done. Single units like the Granjon Arabesque have been examined in detail, collections made by various presses have been explained, but the definitive work that the writers hoped for is yet to appear. The Meynell-Morison essay, however, is solid, and forms the basis for a good historical foundation to the study of printers' flowers.

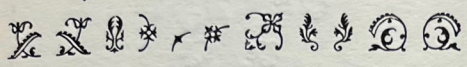
According to Meynell and Morison, the Moorish influence predominates in the first type ornaments. The classical moorish architectural shape is reflected in the first typecast ornaments which survive today in what is commonly called the Garamond ornament shown in pairs:

The early version of this ornament occured not later than 1557 in Lyons or Antwerp. Its origins in the moorish arabesque are definite. The design existed as a binders' tool for years and was certainly one of the first, if not the very first, to be cut in and cast in type metal.

Later research shows that a simple square and a leaf ornament appeared in 1478 in a

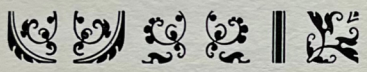
Veronese imprint, *Dell'arte de ben morire*, a book by Cardinal Capranica. The Cardinal's printer, Felice Feliciano, used these designs in earlier manuscripts and later printings. So, while the book's printers, Giovanni and Alberto Alvise, are generally credited with the use of the first printers' ornament, it is quite possible that they must share that honor.

Today's version of this ancient decoration



is made by Monotype in the above units, capable of wondrous combinations, as Bruce Rogers demonstrated in his magnificent folio *World Bible*, embellished solely with these ornaments to create "an oriental feeling."

Our playful use of these units is shown on pages 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.



THE GRANJON ARABESQUE, as used today, is comprised of the above six separate units. No group of printers' flowers is as versatile and rewarding as this modern cutting of one of the very earliest of the printers' flowers. Two complete books, to my knowledge (in English), have been devoted to a display of this beautiful flower that scholars believe was cut by Robert Granjon at Antwerp in about 1565. An arabesque pattern-book, published by Baltazar Silvius in 1554, may have used them; they definitely appear in his books printed in Antwerp from 1572 and later.

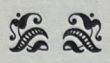
It is possible that Granjon, when working throughout Europe, carried with him the punches for these flowers since scholars have found them in later books from Lausanne, Lyon, Rheims, Rome, and Heidelberg. Our

THE GRANJON ARABESQUE

THE GRANJON ARABESQUE

present-day copy of the Granjon Arabesque was made by the British Monotype Corporation in the 1920s.

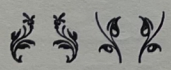
Examples of the exciting manner in which these units combine can be seen on pages 16, 17, 18 and 19 as well as the introductory headings throughout this volume.



THE CASLON FLOWER in one of its commonest forms is shown on page 22 in combination with other flowers. It deservedly merits the praise that American graphic designer Will A. Dwiggins has written about it as reprinted here on page 50.

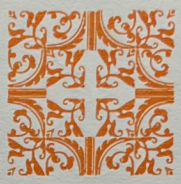
THE TRADITIONAL IVY LEAF. spoken of by Updike, exists in many forms, ancient and contemporary. Frederic Goudy has drawn many. Some of the old and new are shown on page 23 in groups. Usually they are used singly.

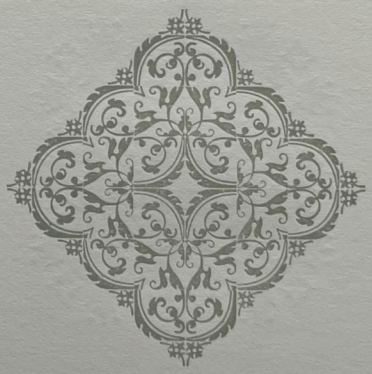
THESE ORNAMENTS, we call them the Bruce Rogers Ornaments, have been used so often and so cleverly by the Old Master that they have attained the status of typographic "classics." Rogers could use them to make literal pictures or abstract designs. A wonder! See pages 20 and 21 for our use of these units.



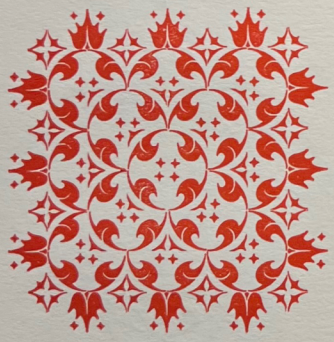
FOR A YOUNG PRINTER, growing up in the 1920s-1930s, the big blue 1148-page 1923 Catalogue of the American Type Founders Company was literally a bible. I ate my bag lunch while studying the catalogue every

THE GRANJON ARABESQUE





BRUCE ROGERS ORNAMENTS

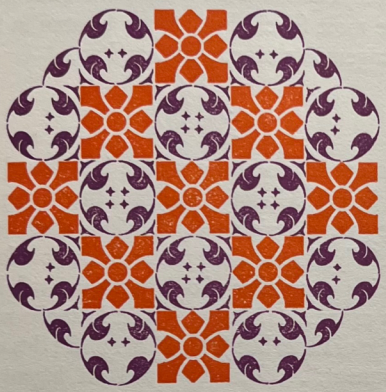


day for several years. Even now, it is still a pleasure to leaf through its pages and find old type friends displayed with such meticulous care, in settings so complex and intricate no designer today would dare ask for them! One of the features of the catalogue was the introduction of the Teague Borders, thirty-eight units designed by Walter Dorwin Teague. Out of the wealth of decorative material thus introduced, a few fonts of the borders have survived in my type cases. They were made into designs as shown on pages 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27. Over the years I have used them as cartouches, headbands, initials, and borders. My regret is that I do not have the entire range of this amazingly useful, even if somewhat dated, family of border units.

In the same 1923 catalogue ATF showed the Cleland Borders, a second charming set of new ornamental units. They were the work of Thomas Maitland Cleland, gifted American graphic artist. Some years later Cleland did an extensive series of borders for Mergenthaler Linotype Company which in 1928 were issued under the name of Garamond Decorative Material. Specimens of these decorations can be seen on page 41. The few fonts of ATF ornaments that have survived in our composing room are the units used in the arrangements on page 32.

In a letter to Paul Bennett, Bruce Rogers wrote this note about the Cleland-designed Linotype Garamond borders, "... your ornamental material, much of which is the best on the market."

BRUCE ROGERS ORNAMENTS



BRUCE ROGERS ORNAMENTS

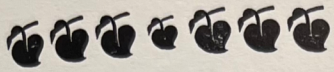
CASLON (OLD ENGLISH) BORDERS

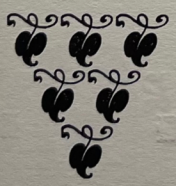
WILL BRADLEY is often called the Father of American Art Deco. Without question he was the pace-setter in the printing and advertising art circles of the early 1900s. When Bradley was designing advertising pieces for the American Type Founders Company, he established a new, vigorous American design style. At age eighty-five, after a long career in American art, Bradley drew for American Type a series of 24-point square border units which they showed in 1953 and named the Bradley Combination Ornaments. They combine most fancifully and can be seen in the arrangements on pages 36 and 37.

THE GLINT ORNAMENTS were introduced by the British Monotype Corporation in 1957. They were designed by David Beihel, who carefully plotted their patterns to allow for a maximum number of combinations with but two ornaments. Beatrice Warde spoke with praise of them but John Ryder made this wry comment, "... there followed an ingenious little flower called 'glint'—which had popularity for a while but which now rests under the dust of disuse, happily out of sight." We used them, with pleasure, on pages 46, 47, 48.

THE PRIMULA (meaning the first of Spring) ornaments shown on pages 39 and 40 were designed for the Typefoundry Amsterdam by the Hungarian artist Imre Reiner in 1952. Of the basic 22 designs Reiner created, our friend Paul Hayden Duensing, then in Kalamazoo, Michigan, recut and cast five of the most useful ones in the 18 point size. They

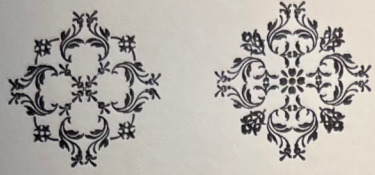
IVY LEAVES



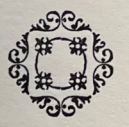


TEAGUE BORDERS

TEAGUE BORDERS



(1)



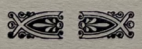
TEAGUE BORDERS

(2)

represent one of the newest and freshest treatments of the type ornament and combine in the most intriguing manner. As the foundry said in their 1952 announcement, "An unlimited number of patterns can be made up by selecting, combining or repeating these figures. In this way any designer or compositor with taste and phantasy (and the power of self-restraint!) can improve the harsh or dull qualities which one often disapproves in contemporary printing design."

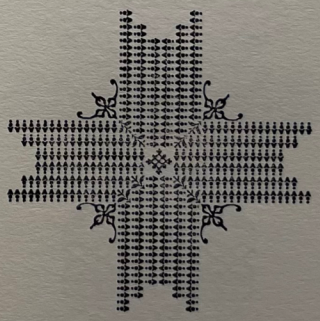
PROFESSOR EMIL RUDOLF WEISS created a new group of floral ornaments at the same time the Weiss Roman type was introduced. We show one of them on page 33. Would that we had more!

FREDERIC W. GOUDY won world-wide recognition for the number and quality of type faces he designed. Some few are still very deservedly popular, many have fallen by the wayside. One that had a tremendous vogue when it was first introduced (a favorite of the early Grabhorns and Taylor & Taylor) and a design that experts say was one of Goudy's best, was the Kennerley face. It had as an adjunct, a flower, shown on page 43, that usually accompanied the fonts. This lovely Kennerley flower, once so popular, deserves to be rediscovered for its simple charm.

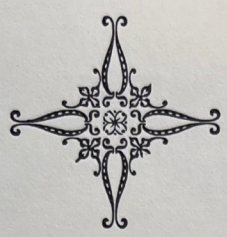


THE MONOTYPE ORNAMENT, above and on page 45, is so commonly associated with legal forms that no manufacturers' warranty seems valid unless enclosed in this border: Yet, despite its hackneyed use, it provided some fun in creating an arabesque-type design.

TEAGUE BORDERS

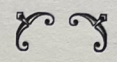


TEAGUE BORDERS



THE BOLD LEAF that appears on page 54 was created by Eric Gill, famous British sculptor, letter-artist and type designer. It introduces a vigorous new note for contemporary work.

RUDOLPH RUZICKA, American artist known for his beautiful wood engravings, lettering, and the design of the Fairfield and Primer matrices, drew for the Linotype Company a few ornamental designs that harmonize with his type in color and feeling. These, the Fairfield Ornaments, are on page 51.

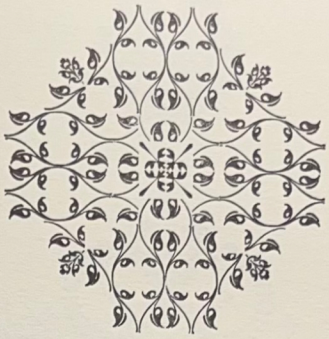


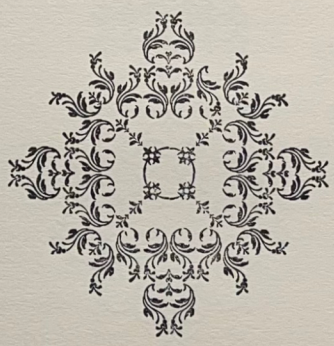
MANY MONOTYPE BORDERS were designed simply to frame a page. They often needed a corner-piece to join the decorative units when they met at the corners. These corner-pieces, when grouped together, sometimes create a complete design in themselves. By combining them with other decorative units, not always of the same family, some interesting results were obtained. Some are shown at left and on page 45.

AMERICAN TYPE FOUNDERS COMPANY took the Bernhard Cursive Flourishes and redrew them calling the result Penline Flourishes. Reminiscent of Spencerian handwriting, they add grace to type compositions and can be combined into attractive designs. While not "flowers" in any sense, they are typographic embellishers, and so, in a left-handed manner, creep into the final pages of this book. A few of the many possible arrangements are printed on page 44.

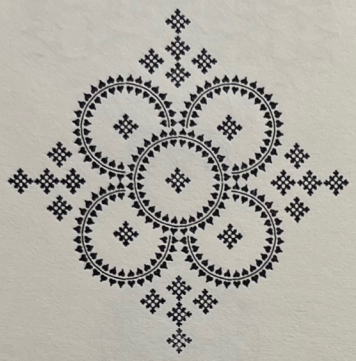
TEAGUE BORDERS

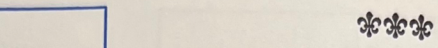
TEAGUE BORDERS





POTPOURRI





As FREDERIC WARDE once wrote, the fun of working with the material found in a well-stocked composing room, is indescribable. Once in the spirit of assembling arabesques, any decorative border at hand becomes a challenge—can it be combined in a pleasing design? Many of the borders make pleasant frames around pages of type. Yet to use these units to make stand-alone decorative spots nearly defied all efforts. The fleur-de-lis and the thistle border as seen on page 42, almost fell into this category. Only by repeated trial and error proofings, and happenchance, did the results, far from expected, evolve.

EVERY COMPOSING ROOM collects odds-and-ends, cats-and-dogs: single ornaments of unknown parentage or manufacture. These we hold in abundance. The challenge to combine some of them into stand-alone designs could not be resisted. So in the pages headed Potpourri, 28, 45, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53 and 54, can be found a score or more of these combinations, some good, some ordinary, yet all fun in the making.

GOUDY FLEURONS

On Printer's Flowers

BY S.M.

THE EARLIEST forms of typographical ornaments are of oriental design. Their derivation from that species of formal decoration known as arabesque or maueresque, becomes clear as we investigate the ornamental works of the early bookbinders. The beautiful arabesques which were developed by Persian and Syrian illuminators and decorators found their way into Europe during the latter half of the 14th century by way of Venice, whose considerable Levantine trade gave that city a unique and cosmopolitan character. Hence it was that Venetian artist-craftsmen were the pioneers in Europe of the new convention. Aldus Manutius, who established his Press here in 1494, was among the earliest enthusiasts for these designs. He continually used them on his book bindings, setting a fashion which culminated in the superb examples bound for Jean Grolier. The arabesque was by this time at the zenith of its fame.

A Book of Patterns, façon arabisque et ytalique, was put forth by Francesco Pellegrino (Paris 1530). Other collections of arabesques followed from Jean de Gourmont (Paris 1536), Virgil Solis (Nurnberg 1550), Peter Flötner (Zurich 1549), Sylvius (Antwerp 1554). The adaptation of the arabesque to typography was slow. While woodcut arabesques were used as borders, head and tail pieces, etc., at Venice as early as 1492, years elapsed before even the most rudimentary of these designs were cast upon metal for companion use with type. The small units, leaves, etc., which decorated the early Aldine bindings were the first ornaments of the new convention to be cast upon type bodies. Titles produced at Venice 1515, Basle 1516, Paris 1520, and Strasburg, all exhibit various forms of the small ornament known to present-day printers as the Aldine leaf. Various adaptations of the Aldine leaf were developed by

the ingenious printers of sixteenth-century France. Lyons craftsmen in particular displayed an enthusiasm for arabesque. Like Aldus, at first they experimented with small units (*circa* 1550).

Among the distinguished Paris designers of the period one Jean de Gourmont holds a place. He was a versatile craftsman, successively a goldsmith, printer and artist. His *Livre de Mauresques*, 1546, included a number of most beautiful specimens, which were almost immediately copied by Lyonnese printers. By 1550-1560, the most enterprising, Jean de Tournes and Guillaume Rouillé, were possessed of complete sets of mauresque head and tail and center pieces, borders, etc., with which they decorated their charming editions of Boccaccio and the Bible. These mauresque decorations were cut upon wood by the famous artist Bernard Salomon. The latter's son-in-law was Robert Granjon (colleague of the celebrated letter-cutter Claude Garamond), who settled in Lyons in 1557 and gave himself to typefounding, cutting for Christopher Plantin, of Antwrep, as well as for the local printers. While his letters on the whole closely follow those of Garamond, his fleurons were derived from the arabesque, and form a distinctly new contribution to printing. Granjon was the first typecutter to realize the importance of founding ornaments on type bodies, and of such design and convenience as to yield great variety of form in combination. Local taste, however, long preferred the woodcut arabesque of *le petit Bernard*, and foreign printers formed Granjon's principal market. His fleurons went in large quantities to Venice, Bologna, Rome, and to Antwerp, whence many arrived in London. This enrichment of English typography dates from about the year 1569. In Elizabeth's time many English printers availed themselves of these very convenient substitutes for the existing woodcut head and tail pieces and title page devices. Thus the first quarto, *Love's Labour Lost*, bears a beautiful flower ornament upon its title page. Wm. Ponsonbie, printer and publisher to Edmund Spenser, gave the poet a richly decorated first edition. Thus many charming uses of the printer's flower were developed by our forefathers in the craft. Nevertheless the decorative value of the flower, though it was ignored and forgotten by subsequent generations, has never been exhausted. Its variety and versatility are remarkable. In clever hands it is possible to design with one or two units almost an infinite number of combinations. The head piece or border composed of a strip of ornaments is easily made and requires no effort. For the making of tail pieces and title page devices, however, a sense of symmetry and design must be brought. It is here that the printer's flower rises to the height of its potentiality, and singularly beautiful results will reward the ingenious compositor. The sympathy in line and colour subsisting between the ornament and the type confers upon the composition the more of unity and consistency, always the underlying necessity of fine typography.

[NOTE: *This essay was printed in 1924 by the Lanston Monotype Machine Company, London, England. It was unsigned but a tiny* SM *was found hidden in an elaborate tail-piece flower arrangement. The author's grasp of the subject matter and his publication of an essay on the same subject in the first issue of the* FLEURON *leaves little doubt that it is an early writing of Stanley Morison. Because it admirably accords with this showing of printers' flowers in arabesque settings it is gratefully reprinted some sixty-two years later.*]

About Typographic Flowers

(EXCERPTS FROM TRADITIONAL WRITINGS)

THERE is no great body of literature that deals with printers' flowers. Most writers, working in the field of typography, mention them briefly, and then only in their manufacture or use. Little is actually known of their history or, in many cases, of their designers. In checking the literature the following extracts have been found.

One of the early printers' grammars, the 1770 book by Luckombe, *History of the Origin and Progress of Printing* (my copy is in wretched condition) has the following material about printers' flowers:

METAL FLOWERS are cast to all the regular bodies of letter, from great primer to nonpareil included; besides several sorts that are to the size of small pica.

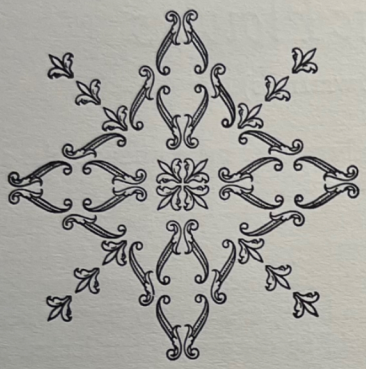
Flowers were the first ornaments which were used at the head of such pages that either began the main work, or else a separate part of it.

Though they formerly had no great variety of flowers; yet were the few of them contrived to look neat and ornamental; being deep in body, and cast so that no bearings-off could be discovered, but looked as one solid row.

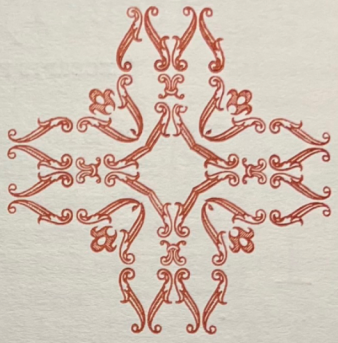
But with the growth of printing, and when letter-cutters strove to excel each other, they introduced also flowers of several shapes and sizes, which were received, and variously employed, till cutting in wood was come to perfection; when that art was eagerly encouraged and flowers not regarded. From that time till very lately, nothing has been thought to grace the first page of a work so well as headpieces cut in wood; of which some have such a coarse look, that even mourning rules would look neater, were they put in the room of them.

The invention of cutting in wood, is claimed by the Germans, though the Italians seem to have a prior right to stile themselves

CLELAND BORDERS



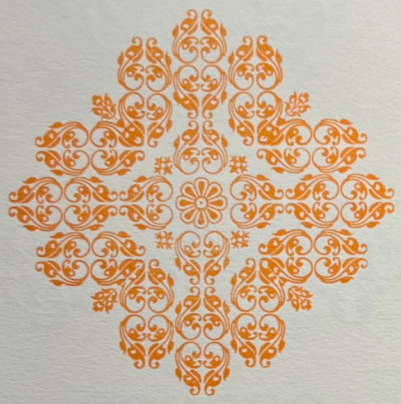
CLELAND BORDERS



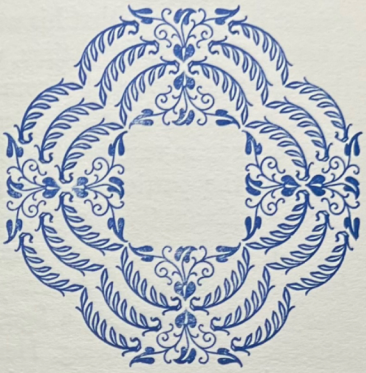
the authors. Nevertheless, though the former may have had their worthies of the said art, it is apparent that they have taken their knowledge with them to the grave. And this has also been the case in France, where the masters of the art of cutting in wood made a secret of their method of working and left no disciples of their abilities. Hence it was, that while Mr. Jackson, an Englishman, was at Paris, he was wholly employed in furnishing printers there with head-pieces and other ornaments of his drawing and cutting. But it being above thirty years since he went to Rome, it must be supposed that his work in France is worn down before this time, which may be the reason that flowers are come into fashion again in France. But this, perhaps, would not have been so readily effected, had it not been for the particular genius and fancy of a compositor at the King's printing-house in Paris, who restored the credit of flowers, by making them yield to every turn which is required to represent a figure answerable to the rules of drawing. Hence it may be guessed what great variety of florid sorts were used to exhibit cyphers of names, forms of crowns, figures of winged and other creatures, and whatever else fancy presented to this typographical florist. But it must be observed, that the King of France paid for this whim; the compositor having a salary and free access to the King's founding-house, to order the cutting and casting every thing that could conduce to make his conceptions mature and their performance admirable.

Thus has the use of flowers been revived in France, and has stimulated the Germans to improve their fusil ornaments, whereby they have been instrumental to the considerable augmentation made here in flowers, by all which we shall be enabled to make flower-pieces of oval, circularly, and angularly turns,

CLELAND BORDERS



CLELAND BORDERS' (LINOTYPE)



instead of having hitherto been confined either to square or to circular flowers. But it is feared, that head-pieces, fats, and tail-pieces of flowers will not long continue either in England, France or Germany, considering that the contriving and making them up, is attended with considerable trouble and loss of time; and as no allowance is made for this, it will not be strange, if but few shall be found who will give instances of their fancy. But this might be remedied, were printers to recompense the compositor for his painful application; and then to preserve the substance of his invention intire, for occasional use.

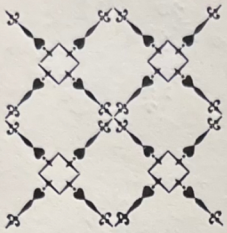
The use of flowers is not confined to ornaments over head pages only, but they serve also, each sort by itself, upon several other occasions. Thus they are used in miscellaneous work, where a single row of flowers is put over the head of each fresh subject, but not where two or more are comprehended under the same title, which commonly have, another, by the same, &c, for their head. As therefore flowers appertain to heads, it ought to be a rule, that a single row of them should be put over a head that begins a page, be it part, chapter, article or any other division, in work that has its divisions separated by flowers.

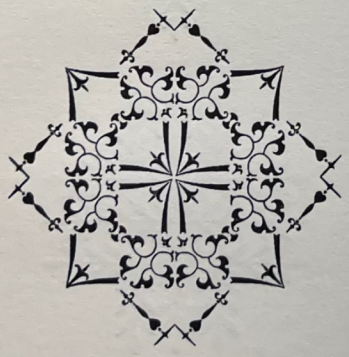
Flowers being cast to the usual bodies of letter, their size should be proportionable to the face of the characters; since it would be as wrong to use great primer flowers with long primer letter, as it is improper to embolden the look of great primer by long primer flowers.

Flowers being either of a rectilinear, angular, circular, or square shape, they are used accordingly in making them up for head-pages, of whom we have in this work introduced a few specimens.

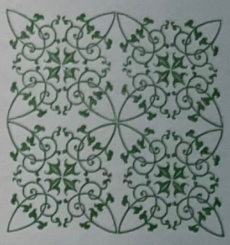
MONOTYPE (WEISS) FLOWERS

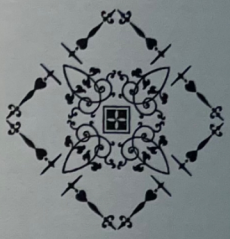
BRADLEY COMBINATION ORNAMENTS

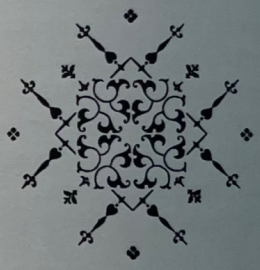




BRADLEY COMBINATION ORNAMENTS







But as the construction of flower head pieces entirely depends upon the fancy of a compositor, it would be presumption in us to direct him in this point: we therefore leave the displaying of flowers to his own judgment and to the variety of materials for this purpose.

For want of flowers, references and other sorts belonging to a fount, are sometimes made use of to serve as well at the beginning as conclusion of work of a small size.

Edward Rowe Mores wrote *A Dissertation Upon English Typographical Founders and Founderies* in 1779, which Updike edited and reprinted for the Grolier Club in 1924. It has a few paragraphs on typographical flowers:

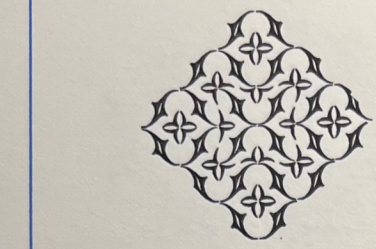
THE METAL FLOWERS were the first ornaments used in printed books to be set at the head of the first page and the tail of the last page, as well as the at the head and tail of any separate part of the whole work, and they were sometimes used as an edging to the matter according to the taste of the author or the printer, they were used but sparingly and with small variety, but in time they became more numerous, and were cut in several shapes forms and devices, and continued in reputation till Cutters in Wood supplanted them, when Mr Moxon wrote they were accounted old-fashioned but the use of them was revived by the French and Germans and the variety of them considerably encreased by the Two Mr James's in England.

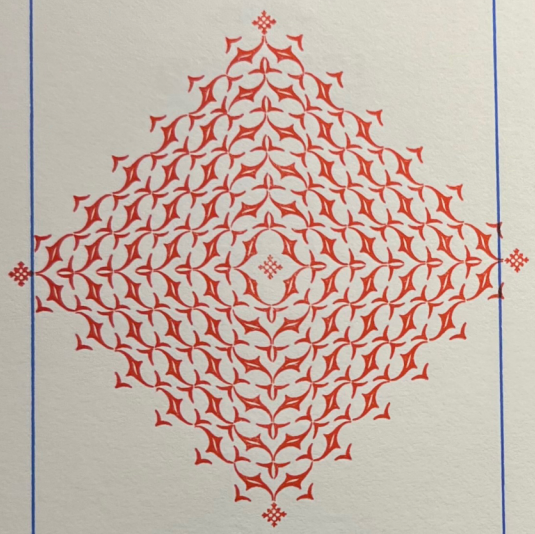
The flower-matrices in their foundery have been divided into old and new, which to be

BRADLEY COMBINATION ORNAMENTS

BRADLEY PARAGRAPH TERMINALS

MONOTYPE ORNAMENTS



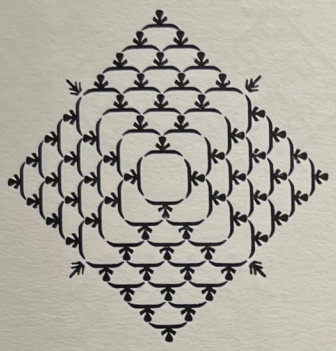


sure is a division, but such as conveys nothing or a false idea to the understanding.

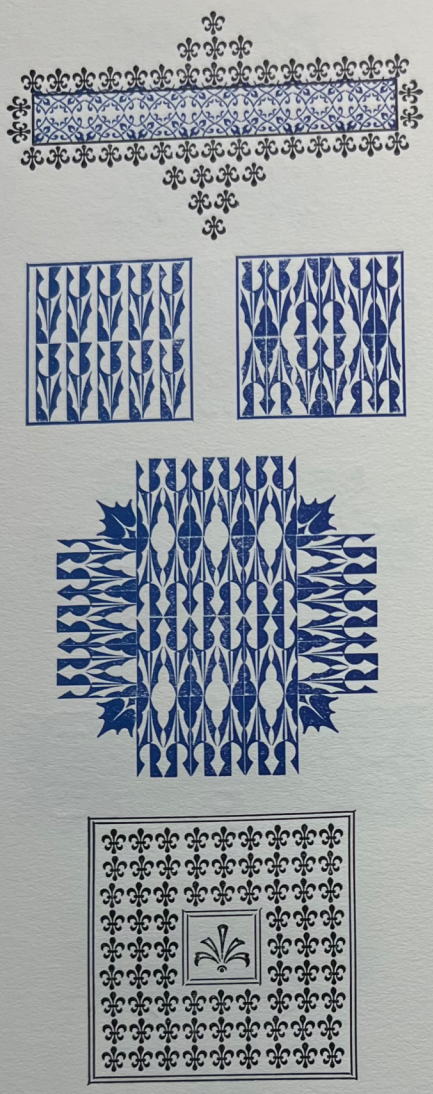
We are to observe then that the latter, though mostly now in vogue, are mere figures of fancy made up of circular oval and angular turns, contrived to look light airy and unmeaning, and to try the genius or patience of a compositor.

But the former expressed some meaning and were adapted to other purposes then barely to dress and decorate a page, they were formed from real objects natural and artificial, civil and military, as from weeds and flowers of the field and garden, leaves, branches, fruits, flower-baskets, flower-pots, urns, crosses, banners, launces swords, and tilting-spears, and other simples culled from the fields of nature and of heraldry; yet germane to the subject matter of the work.

They were frequently emblematical and monitory; as cherubs faces for the hymns of charity girls, hour-glasses for lugubrious orators, and mort-heads for the parish-clerks, they were symbolical of nations; as the crown and rose, the crown and lyz, the crown and harp;—of dignities and orders; as diadems, crowns, mitres and coronets; the red hat called at Camb. the Cardinal's cap, where too the mitre is called the golden night-cap; the courtclass; the arms of Ulster, and the anchor of hope: the Scotch-thistle and sprigs of rue; both sub-symbolical; the former rendered more so by the cry de guerre "*Noli me tangere*;"—of states and conditions; as the myrtle, the weeping willow, and the bugle-horn, with many others which to enumerate would be tedious here.



FLEUR-DE-LIS, THISTLE



sun from the East—from the East of pierced minarets, of enleathered Korans, of wrought lamps, of damascened swords, of silken tapestries. The art of the Renaissance—itself blowing from east to west—was absorbed in the 16th century with oriental fashions—*arabesques* and *mauresques*.

How came it that the Europe of the 16th century should be so familiar with oriental modes? The high roads to that style are many and clearly marked. Fifteenth-century Venice held the East in fee. Part of her tribute from Constantinople was paid in rich silks bearing arabesque designs. Oriental workmen made their sword-hilts, marvellously chased with arabesques, in many a city of Italy. . . . There was a tributary to the stream of taste from Spain of that great mauresque, the Alhambra. Italy was the center, to receive and to give.

From 1529 onwards printers vied in producing pattern-books of oriental designs for the use of painters, goldsmiths, weavers, engravers, image makers and needleworking women. These patterns, which were later to grow into printers' flowers, appear and reappear in an amazing profusion of delicate variations in all the domestic arts of Italy and France in the 16th century.

The arabesque quickly appeared in book decoration. Aldus, who established his press in Venice in 1494, took full advantage of his opportunities to copy choice oriental bindings. By analysis he reduced the lines and curves of the arabesque into a number of component tools, which he cut upon metal. Soon they were not confined to bindings but appear on the printed page. Not yet worked into combination, nor yet cast as type, they are not properly to be called printers' flowers; but they make a big step theretowards. The "Aldine leaf" is an example.

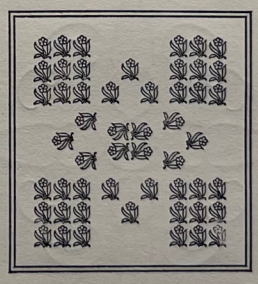
It was in France, to be precise in Paris and Lyons, that the arabesques were to be put to their richest use. Geofroy Tory and Bernard Salomon, the two finest typographical decorators of their day, or perhaps of any day, made arabesque borders, head-pieces, tail-pieces and *vignettes*. From these larger ornaments were detached repetitive or repeatable items of design, to be cast by the founders in exactly the same way as letters were cast. And here, with the principle and practice of combination, we arrive at the printers' flower proper. The arabesque was submitted to the discipline, and achieved the paradoxic freedom and flexibility in use, of the type body.

Why are ancient flowers so appropriate to modern typography? An alert question, with an interesting answer.

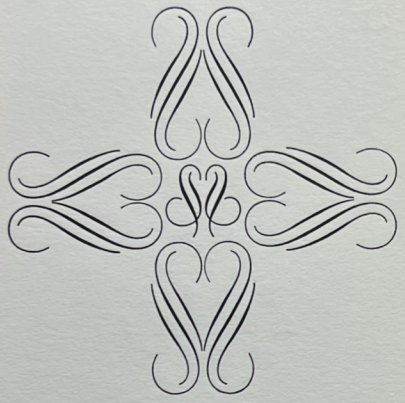
The 16th century in France is all-important to present-day printing. Type assumed then for the first time the form and weight (and so what we call the "colour") which has been retained to this day. Black letter and the earlier "humanistic" heavy Roman types were left behind: and Garamond and his great anonymous brethren in the art made their delicate (or as an old writer has it, "tender-faced") types which age was not to wither nor custom to stale.

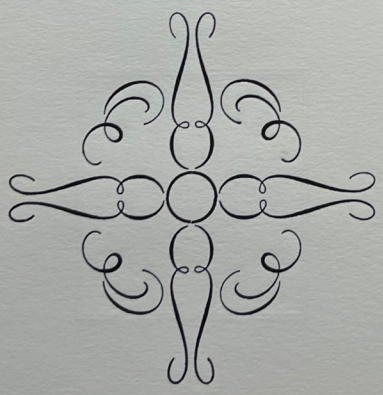
Now the supreme importance of this customariness of colour is this: *All the typographical ornaments, or flowers, which were made to accord with colour four centuries ago match the colour of our type today*—for we have held to that same colour. They thus give us the essential of good type decoration. If anything as complex as fine printing could be reduced to a formula, it would be this: evenness of colour over a whole page or opening, so that head-piece, type, border, yes, even initial, make an even picture with no blank pits nor no shadowed mountains.

KENNERLEY FLOWERS



PENLINE FLOURISHES





But your flowers! They will stand as they are, infinite in their varieties and combinations, and infinitely appropriate. "Come into the garden, Maude!" As flower-borders will sweeten the sight and smell of your garden, so may borders of flowers gladden your pages. Come into the garden; make for yourself fresh posies. "Gather ye roses while ye may!"

In 1928 Frederic Warde wrote and arranged for the Lanston Monotype Corporation of London a small folio volume *Printers Ornaments*, now a typographical collector's item of the first magnitude. In the introduction he writes, with conviction:

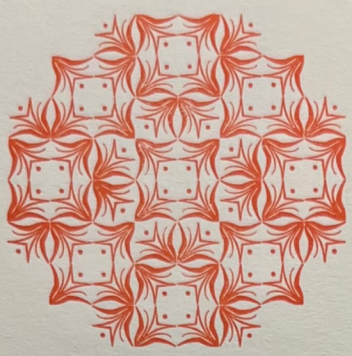
A GOOD TYPOGRAPHER is one who can arrange type so as to produce a graceful and orderly page that puts no strain on the eye. This is the first and last fundamental requisite of book design, and like most simple operations it is a matter of years of training. But beyond this essential problem of type arrangement is another field for the printer-designer which is less austere and richer in opportunities for invention, namely the decoration or embellishment of the type message. Here is the little added touch that goes beyond the bare essentials of taste into the realm of fantasy. For this reason the ornamentation of printing is at once the most charming and the most dangerous diversion that the typographer can find; charming because of its power to add beauty to the strict simplicity of type; dangerous because all matters of decoration call upon the utmost discretion and sense of fitness for their effec-

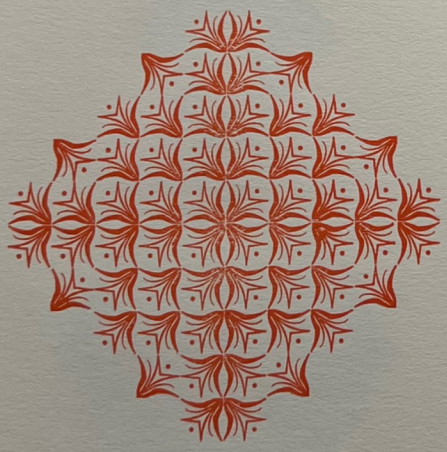
tive use. There are also many ways of beautifying a page. Before and during the early days of printing illuminators carried over their arts into the printed page, and since then woodcuts, intaglio engravings and lithography have all been used. But it is a question whether any method can be so happily combined with type as can "printer's flowers" which have been in use since the sixteenth century. These small decorative units—the smaller and simpler the better for use in combination—have the immense typographic advantage of having been recently re-cut in steel and cast just as type is cut and cast, and therefore can be printed with the text at the same operation. For this reason, however quaint or delicate their outline may be they are of the family of printing types rather than having the nature of an alien process; they can be demurely and inoffensively pleasing only because of this family tie. In fact the line between letters and ornaments is so arbitrary that it is quite possible to use such types as section-marks or even graceful italic letters, in combinations forming patterns, for decorating a page, whilst certain initial letters, especially of the fanciful sorts, are ornaments in themselves.

The art of the designer is expressed in the creation of patterns, that is, of units or groups of units arranged so as to give the eye a sense of deliberate rhythm, either static, as in the case of a simple repeated pattern, or dynamic as with a form implying natural growth. In the first case alone the possibilities of combination of one or two simple motifs are practically endless; and in the case of dynamic patterns Nature herself has never found a limit to ingenuity. The fascination of experimenting with combining, reversing, spacing-out and alternating the simplest unit is indescribable.

POTPOURRI, CORNER PIECES

GLINT ORNAMENTS

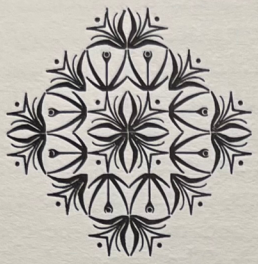




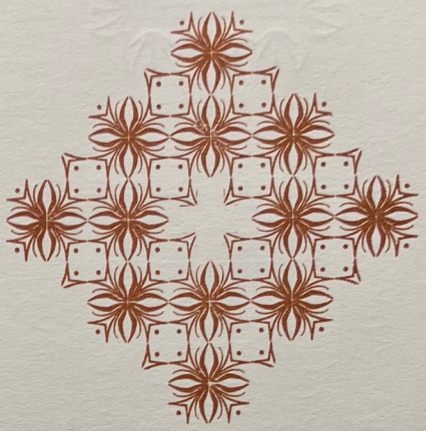
Beatrice Warde, typography's "first lady," wrote an introductory note for the Spring 1960 issue of *Monotype Recorder* discussing the possibilities of "Border types as material for the study of pattern design." She said, in her own inimitable way, in part:

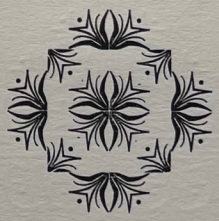
TYPOGRAPHIC puritanism—that design-mood in which the eye rejoices in dramatic concentrations of Plain White Space and abhors ornamentation as frivolous—still exercises a firm dictatorship over Continental jobbing style; but in Britain in recent years, there has been a spirited uprising of the Cavaliers against the Roundheads. An invitation card to a festive occasion no longer has to look as if it were summoning the guests to a lecture on sanitary engineering. The hand of hospitality can now safely wear lace on its wrist; the card can be embellished, and its message functionally framed, by a discreetly decorative border. . . . Sellers and Yeatman in their Penguin edition, *1066 and All That*, spoke for most schoolboys in distinguishing the Roundheads ("Right and Repulsive") from the Cavaliers ("Wrong but Wromantic"). The puritanical approach to typography is by way of moral arguments: the heavy black rule, the sullen grot, are seen as "right" for the inhuman epoch in which we are supposed to be living, *even if* the job is a wine-list or a Christmas card. The unabashed Eclectic, on the other hand, to whom any "period" can be a starting-point for invention, may have to be told that the fun he had in confecting a successful programme-cover would be out of place on the cover of a scientific journal. . . . The designer's first question is not what

GLINT ORNAMENTS

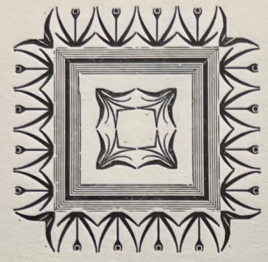


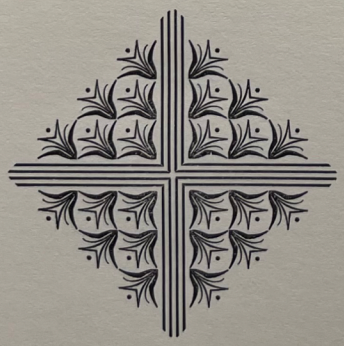
GLINT ORNAMENTS





GLINT ORNAMENTS

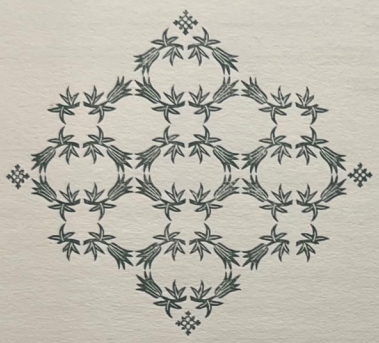




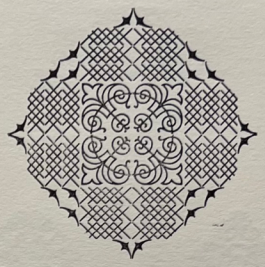
sort of age we are living in, but what that particular job is supposed to do: not how it can most clearly indicate its origin in a single school of thought, but how it can achieve freshness and unexpectedness through some new application of the magic wand of "Fitness for Purpose."

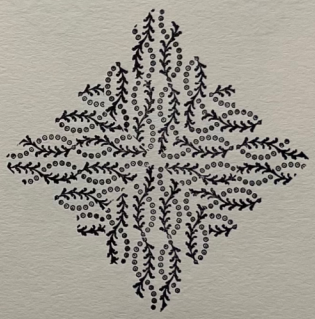
Fitness for purpose! Under that irrepressible slogan, the gaiety of the printer's flower is no longer being despised as levity. The impulse to decorate, to embellish with rhythmical patterns, stems from deep psychological roots. Like dancing, or music-making, it is marginal to language but within the field of communication. Like dancing it can be taught: its immense range of possible steps and rhythms, its challenge to wit and ingenuity, can and ought to be opened-up to young minds. The type-cast border has special advantages as a medium for such practice. Its lace is not "imitation" but real. It is a *composition* in the most literal sense: an exercise in combination where every element can be distinguished and watched-at-work. In three respects it is modern. It calls for some of that awareness of relationship at which the mathematicians, the arbiters of our century, excel. It offers problems in the combination of mass-produced units of predetermined design, on a "modulus" expressed in points. And to a generation that has been trained to scorn anything "phoney," a typeset border has much the same advantage over a line-block that real lace has over "imitation." The zinc cut provides a shrunken mechanical-imitation of what the artist drew while the typographic border suffers no such diminution. The half-tone is an attempt to imitate, by optical illusion, what the artist washed with his brush: the cast metal type, whether letter or border, is doing to the paper just what it was intended to do.

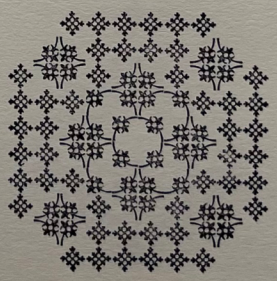
POTPOURRI



POTPOURRI





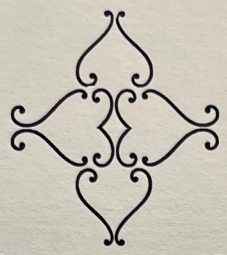


After praising William Caslon's types in laudatory terms, Daniel Berkeley Updike, in *Printing Types: Their History, Forms, and Use* (1922), concludes, "Caslon types are so beautiful in mass, and above all so legible and 'common-sense,' that they can never be disregarded, and I doubt if they will ever be displaced. Caslon's ornaments or flowers deserve in their way as much praise as his types." Updike then quotes Will A. Dwiggins who wrote the following note on the Caslon flowers:

To a designer's eyes they have, taken as individual patterns, an inevitable quality, a finality of right construction that baffles any attempt to change or improve. . . . Excellent as single spots, the Caslon flowers multiply their beauties when composed in bands or borders as ornamentation for letterpress. They then become a true flowering of the letter forms—as though particular groups of words had been told off for special ornamental duty and had blossomed at command into intricate, but always typographical patterns. This faculty possessed by the Caslon ornaments of keeping an unmistakable type quality through all their graceful evolutions sets them apart from the innumerable offerings of the type founders' craft as a unique group. . . . From the point of view of the pressman, as practical working types for impressing ink into paper, they may be claimed to be better, so far as English and American designs are concerned, than any type-flowers made since their period. The proportion of printing surface to open paper is excellently adapted for the purposes of clean, sharp impression. Certain ones have elements broken by tint-lines into a clear-printing gray, and

POTPOURRI

FAIRFIELD ORNAMENTS



it will be observed that this tint is not the gray of copper-plate, but has the weight and solidity of a printing surface backed by metal.

Late in his second volume of *Printing Types*, Mr. Updike wrote:

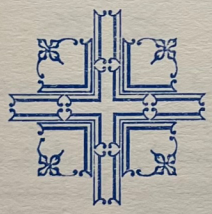
In some of the best old and modern printing, the only typographical ornaments used are solid black florets or "ivy leaves." These are a very early form of type ornament, and fifteenth and sixteenth century books, in which they constantly appear, show most of the best varieties. Froben's books are full of such ornaments. Those still used by the Oxford University Press were part of Dr. Fell's gift. Florets give life to a large or solid page of type, where other less sedate forms of ornament would not be appropriate. Most of them accord best with sturdy old style types. Some more sharply cut designs of later date harmonize better with modern face types.

As early types became lighter, ornaments became more open and complicated in design, and in combination formed definite patterns. Examples have come down to us from the earliest foundries, and are seen in their specimen sheets.

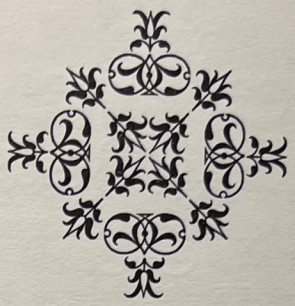
In his quiet, off-hand manner, in his hard-to-lay-down book, *Paragraphs on Printing*, published by Rudge in 1943, Bruce Rogers, America's foremost book designer, is quoted:

Should you have a good designer of book decoration at hand use his work by all means, if you can afford it . . . modern taste demands

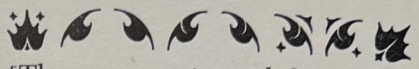
POTPOURRI



MONOTYPE ORNAMENTS

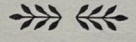


fresh work in every detail. . . . The newer ornamental additions to the printer's resources are a reversion to piece borders, and unit ornaments designed to carry out the present-day styles of typography. Many of them are excellent, especially those based on calligraphic models, though most of these permit of but few variations in composition. A series produced a few years ago permits a greater variety of arrangement:



[These ornaments, we believe, were designed by Rogers himself.]

If an antique or rough-surfaced paper is to be used in your book you will find that type ornaments work better on the press than most line cuts do. But that is largely because the engravings are sometimes not made well enough. Zinc etchings are imperfect as they come out of the acid bath; you cannot sink them into the paper as you would with type ornaments.



A delightful book, *Flowers & Flourishes*, was written for Mackays in 1976 by John Ryder. It shows, by founders, the wealth of ornamental material this house has acquired over the years. Along with the specimens, the compiler wrote some trenchant observations, two of which we quote:

THE TRADITIONAL use of flowers will always be needed to reproduce the image of a particular period in typography and if the original is properly examined and sensitively transcribed the effect can be very convincing. Such traditional uses are as markers, pointers, paragraph markers and line fillers,

hiatus marks, title-page borders, bands of decoration, and so on. All of these examples extend back to the fifteenth century as printers' types. The fist as a pointer, for instance, sometimes looked upon as a vulgar modern device, was discreetly used at Strasburg in 1498 in an edition of *Horace* by Johann Gruninger.

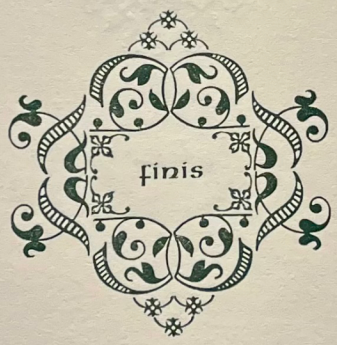
THE ENCOURAGEMENT to use decoration should be accompanied by a warning. So many printed pages are ruined by underdeveloped designers putting their marks on the title-pages and chapter openings with an inappropriate flower. Restraint is the first and highest canon of typographic practice. The designer's fist must always remain invisible.

Bruce Rogers, in *Paragraphs on Printing*, sums up the use of decoration:

THE ULTIMATE TEST, in considering the employment or the rejection of an element of design or decoration, would seem to be: does it look as if it were *inevitable*, or would the page look as well or better for its omission?

Bruce Rogers ends his printer's note for the Italian Oldstyle type specimen with this happy thought:

WHEN my own time comes to be marooned on a desert island (by a party of no longer indulgent friends, whose books I haven't completed, or whose letters I haven't answered) instead of taking along the favorite volumes that most amateur castaways vote for, I think I shall arrange to be shipwrecked in company with a Monotype caster and a select assortment of ornamental matrices. The fascination and amusement—and the occasional happy result—that can be got out of the almost numberless combinations of a few simple units would enable me to cast away for an indefinite period with great contentment.



SEVERAL YEARS of planning setting and refining the arabesques, selecting reprint copy and writing the commentary, printing the sheets in different colors of ink, resulted in 200 copies of this book printed by Richard J. Hoffman in his shop in Van Nuys, California. The project was completed in early 1987. Linotype Electra was used for the text, Deepdene for display. The designs were made of individual pieces of foundry and monotype units, collected over the past fifty years. The paper is Mohawk Superfine Letterpress. The binding by Bela Blau, Los Angeles.

#67

Richard J. Hoffman